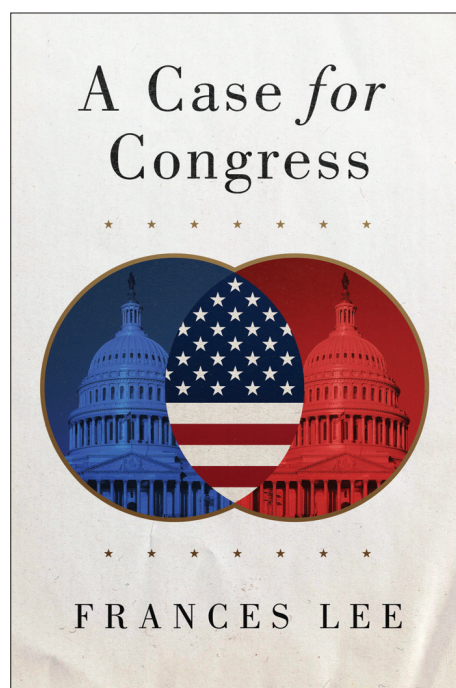




*A reminder of the overlooked ways that
the US Congress gets it right*

A Case for Congress

By Frances Lee

Polarized. Dysfunctional. Toxic. Broken. These are only some of the negative words Americans use to describe the United States Congress. Nowadays hardly anyone has something good to say about either the House of Representatives or the Senate, the two bodies that make up Congress. But is this common viewpoint too negative, too one-sided? And is it based on solid evidence or reasonable expectations? In *A Case for Congress*, political scholar Frances Lee provides a more balanced assessment, arguing for the enduring worth and importance of the representative assembly.

As one of the three branches of the US government, Congress stands at the heart of our liberal democracy. This continues to be true even when Congress is divided and fractious. Lee draws from a wide range of scholarship and current data to highlight three important functions that Congress continues to serve, as envisioned by the authors of the Constitution: representing the American people along multiple dimensions, lawmaking even in the face of persistent disagreement, and holding executive branch officials accountable. While Congress never fully achieves any of its functions, it still serves them.

Written in a clear and engaging style, *A Case for Congress* challenges readers to think against the grain and appreciate the Congress we have, not an ideal Congress that never in fact existed. “The bathwater is dirty,” the author acknowledges, “but there is a baby in there.” It turns out that a complex, polarized, distrustful republic of some 340 million Americans needs Congress more than ever.

Frances Lee is Professor of Politics and Public Affairs at the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. She is the author or editor of numerous books, including *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* and *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate*.

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